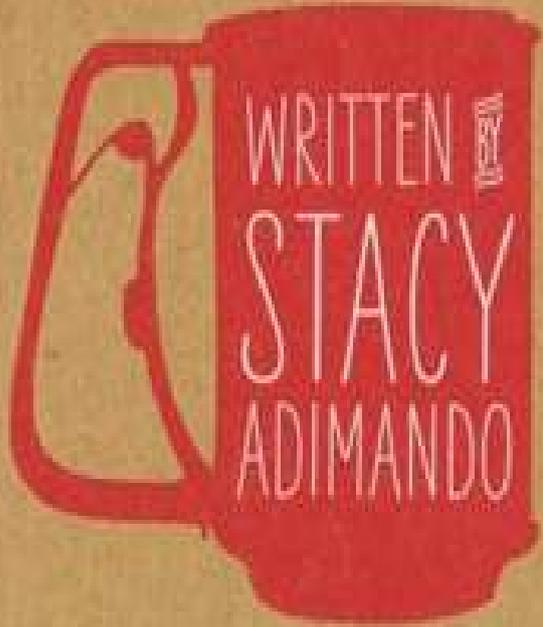




THE

COOKIE PEDIA

Mixing, Baking, and
Reinventing the Classics



WRITTEN BY
STACY
ADIMANDO

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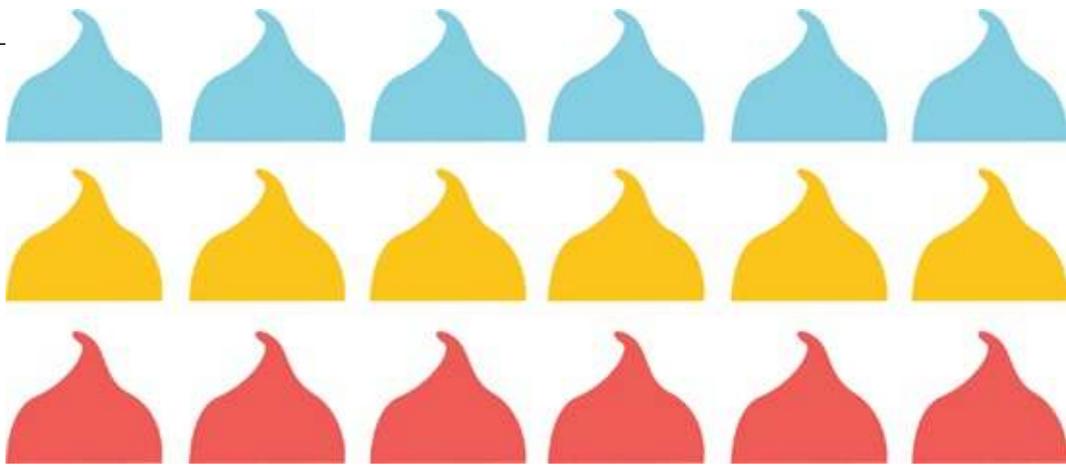
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Stacy Adimando

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Tara Striano



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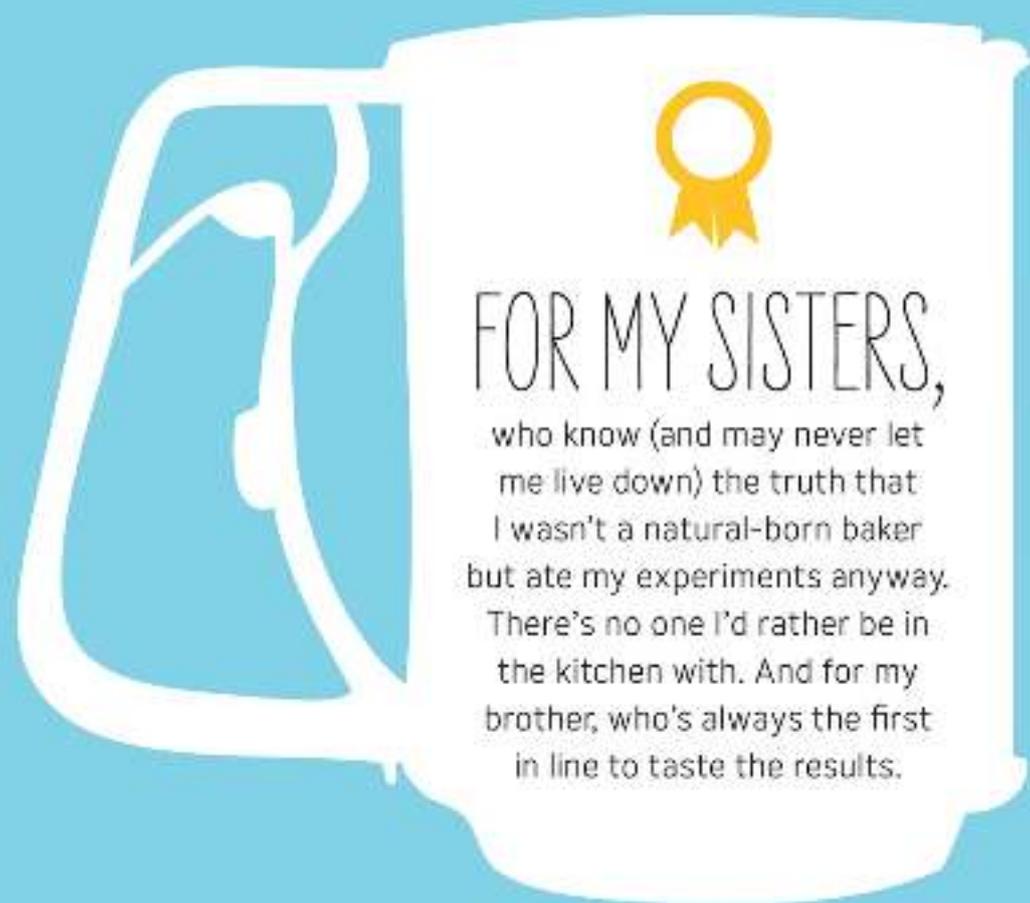
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FOR MY SISTERS,

who know (and may never let me live down) the truth that I wasn't a natural-born baker but ate my experiments anyway. There's no one I'd rather be in the kitchen with. And for my brother, who's always the first in line to taste the results.



“Think what a better world it would be if we all, the whole world, had cookies and milk about three o’clock every afternoon and then lay down on our blankets for a nap.”

—ROBERT FULGHUM



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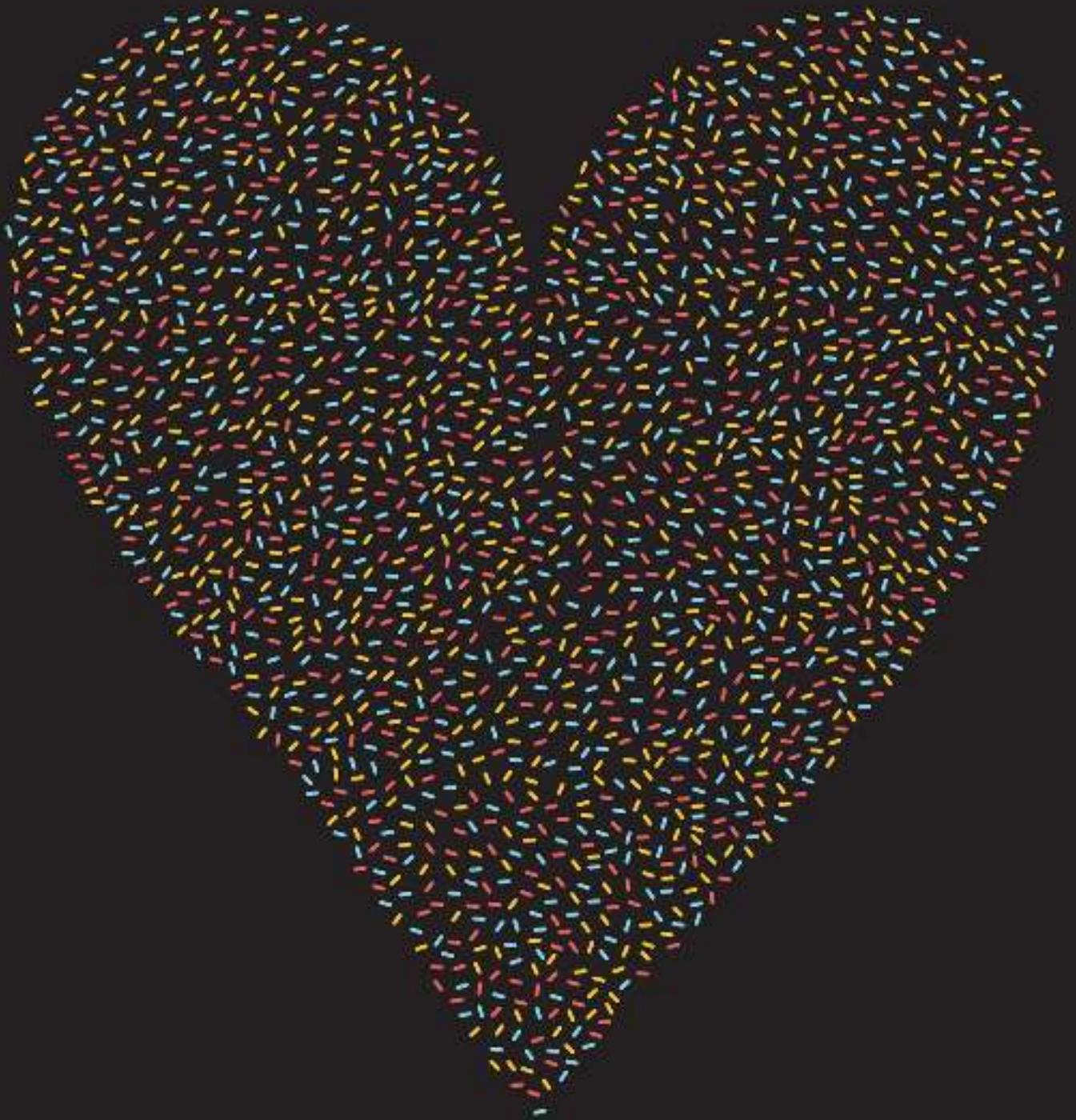
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INTRODUCTION

HELLO!

On a conscious level or not, all bakers know that when their plate of cookies, their tray of chocolate croissants, or their fat slice of five-layer cake hits the table, they will be the most popular person in the room. And that's only half of the fun: It's hard to beat a cozy afternoon in the kitchen, mixing, baking, and reinventing recipes, with the smell of freshly baked cookies wafting through the house.

With that in mind, I filled the pages of this book with recipes that stand to be remembered. It's for the modern home baker who may or may not know all the hows and whys of cookie chemistry just yet, but who gets a rush from learning it—and a little sugar high from the mini-glory that results.

~~I've always struggled with the concept of having just one career. If I had it my way, I'd turn every passion into a lifetime one and give each hobby the time it deserved to flower into something larger, and longer lasting. Cooking and baking are wonderful in that way. Through simply pursuing my passion for feeding the people I love, I have been a culinary student, a restaurant cook, a magazine writer, a recipe developer, one hell of a hostess (if I may), and now a cookbook author.~~

As with any creative endeavor—whether it's music, art, or a culinary path—they say you can't truly experiment or reinvent before first mastering the classics. This book gave me the excuse I needed to pay my bakerly dues: months of mixing, testing, and endless cookie eating (not that I'm complaining), inflated gas bills that tallied quickly from 24-hour oven marathons, a permafrost of flour all over my kitchen table and floor, and sore shoulders and feet that I dutifully self-massaged on a nightly basis for the better part of a year. I wouldn't trade a moment of it for the world. First, because it seared into my memory forever the techniques of great cookie baking. And second, because it allowed me to twist and morph and tweak the old-school recipes into something easy and new, and something that is now my own. I'd like to encourage you to do the same: Use this book to bake all the classic cookies our grandmothers used to make and to reinvent them and make them to suit your taste.

I took on this project in full understanding that it'd be tough to improve on the top 50 classic cookie recipes. (But, pssst, we have.) Won't you join me at the oven?

—Stacy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe this project, and so much gratitude, to the family, friends, and colleagues who have supported me along this and other culinary journeys. To my mother and father first and always: You are my rocks. Not only have you given me whatever gifts I have but you endlessly inspire me to use them in new and wonderful ways. To my grandparents Stella, Santa, Frank, and the memory of my grandpa Louie, I am so blessed to have inherited my cooking sense—and many other senses—from you. All my love. To my friends, especially my Brooklyn-based ones, thank you for your patience, faith, and cheerleading. We have so many more kitchen memories to make.

A heartfelt thank-you must go out to my editor Margaret McGuire— an eternal optimist and fellow baker who helped foster this book every step of the way. And to the rest of the team at Quirk as well as Tara Striano, Penelope Bouklas, Jessica O'Brien, and Geraldine Pierson, our wonderful all-lady photo crew. This book is just as much yours as it is mine. Many, many thanks for sharing the experience (and those final batches of cookies) with me.

Finally, to the staff at *Every Day with Rachael Ray*, my chef-instructors at the Institute of Culinary Education, the Savoy kitchen staff, and my dear friends Laura, Kristy, and Rich: You all had a hand in shaping me into the cook I am today. And for that, I am forever indebted.

Now that the sap is out of the way ... let's do what we do best.



HERE'S

the thing about cookies: Unlike most desserts, they actually taste *even better* if they're craggy, homemade, and a little imperfectly shaped. That's why baking cookies is so easy and fun. It's all about spending time with friends and baking together, swapping cookie recipes, and sharing plates of goodies with your neighbors. Roll up your sleeves, make a mess, and have fun!

KITCHEN TOOLS: MEET YOUR NEW BEST FRIENDS

Brownie Pan Brownies made in a glass, nonstick, or dark-colored metal tend to cook a little more quickly and have chewier edges. If you have an insulated metal pan, you may find your brownies need a few extra minutes in the oven. Use the toothpick test to determine doneness.

Cookie Cutters Choose shapes you love. Small details on some cookies may cause the edges to brown more quickly or to break more easily. Keep a close eye on cut cookies in the oven and transfer them carefully after baking.

Cookie Sheets The ideal sheets are thick, heavy, and light-colored metal without major rims. Darker or thinner metals may cause faster browning, but it's not the end of the world. If your sheets are rimmed, flip them over and bake on the unrimmed side for the most even heat distribution.

Double Boiler This technically refers to a set of fitted saucepans, but you can create your own double boiler by resting a glass or metal bowl atop a small saucepan. First fill the saucepan with about an inch of water and bring the water to a low simmer. Set the bowl on top—make sure it's *not* touching the water—so the steam can gently heat the bowl, causing a slow rise in temperature. For our purposes, it's primarily used for melting chopped chocolates.



A slow, gentle rise in temperature is the best way to melt chocolate.

Dry Measuring Cups Spoon dry ingredients like flour, oats, cocoa powder, or sugar lightly into the cup and then level it off by running the straight edge of a knife across the top.



Many baking powder cans have their own built-in edges for leveling.

Food Processor You'll use one for grinding nuts, finely chopping dried fruits, and cutting cold butter into flour to make flaky doughs.

Grater A microplane or the small side of a box grater can be used to zest citrus fruits for flavoring doughs. Move the fruit, not the grater, for the most ease.

Ice Cream or Cookie Scoops Using one of these to spoon out dough onto a cookie sheet provides consistent portions so cookies bake evenly. (They also look purty.)

Liquid Measuring Cups Portioning liquid in one of these means you don't have to fill a dry measuring cup to the top (i.e., risk spilling liquid everywhere), and there's a handy little spout for pouring. Be sure you're measuring with the cup rested on a level surface, and aim for the bottom of the gradation marks as an indicator.

Measuring Spoons For dry ingredients, fill the spoon to the top, then level off with a knife. For liquid ingredients, just fill the spoon up to the tippy top.

Mixing Bowls Baker's rule of thumb: You can never have too many mixing bowls. I keep a few nested sets of stainless ones within reach at all times. Use them for mixing and reserving ingredients, storing egg shells and butter wrappers, and even resting dirty baking tools.

Parchment Paper Lining brownie pans and baking sheets with a piece of this paper treated with a slippery silicone lining usually eliminates the need to grease the pan. *Bonus:* No need to scrub the pan clean after baking! Note that wax paper is not a proper substitute (the waxy coating on it tends to melt under high direct heat).

Piping Bag and Pastry Tips Buying a legit piping bag is worlds above the jury-rigged plastic baggie option, and a dozen or so should cost you only a few bucks. Keep a small and large plain round tip and a small and large star tip handy.

Rolling Pin Handles, no handles, use whatever works for you! If it helps you learn to roll evenly, try sandwiching the chilled dough between two pieces of parchment or wax paper. Peel it away before cutting out cookies.

Sifter There are tools made specifically for this purpose, and if you have them, terrific. Everyone else can use a fine-mesh sieve or strainer.

Small Offset Spatula Because the metal blade is bent where it meets the handle, it provides great control while icing, frosting, or spreading fillings.

Spatula Keep a flexible one handy for scraping down the sides of the mixing bowl and stirring in mix-ins like chocolate chips. (The cook gets dibs on licking it clean.)

Stand Mixer Although you can make most of the cookies in this book without a stand mixer, the recipe steps were in fact written for cooks who have them. Don't fret if you're not one of them. Here are some tips:

- When working with multiple sugars, mash the sugars together first with a fork before adding the butter.
 - Act like a mixer. When you're creaming together the butter and sugar, beat hard. Beat well. Use a spatula to firmly press the two together until smooth, fully incorporated, and looking lighter than before (similar to frosting). You shouldn't be able to easily see the sugar granules.
-

Wire Rack Meet your new sidekick. A wire baker's rack works wonders for air-cooling cookies quickly and evenly. Because they allow air to circulate around both the top and the bottom of the baked good, they prevent inner moisture from being trapped and sabotaging the nice crisp bottom. They'll save you time and free up your cookie sheet for the next round, too.



Baker's Best Friend

COOKIE SPEAK: WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY...

Baking Ideally, this should happen one cookie sheet at a time in a preheated oven. If you do place two sheets in the oven at once, rotate them halfway through the baking time so they cook as evenly as possible.

Beating Use the paddle attachment on a stand mixer, or use a hand mixer. Start at low speed and

work your way up to medium.

Chilling To place dough in the fridge to firm it up, blend, and develop the flavors, let the moisture fully incorporate into the dry ingredients, and let the glutens relax—er, chill. Most cookie doughs will be stiff enough to work with after 30 minutes to an hour in the fridge (or about half that time in the freezer), but the best flavors develop when the dough is left for 2 hours or up to a full day.

TIP: You'll notice darker caramelization and bolder flavors from doughs that have chilled for a longer time.

Cooling This last step determines the cookie's texture. Cookies left to cool on the pan might steam slightly, never fully drying and crisping on the bottom, or continue to bake. For best results, let the cookies set up for a few minutes on the sheet (they'll be less likely to crack and break when you spatula them off), then move them to a wire rack to finish up. Some cookies will deflate slightly as they cool.

Creaming Beating together butter and sugars to create air pockets (read: a taller, airier cookie). The sugar granules smooth out the fat, leaving behind tiny air holes. To make sure your ingredients really bind together, use room-temperature butter (too cold, it'll be difficult to whip; too melty, and it won't be able to absorb air). Leave it out hours in advance if you can.

TIP: When creaming in a firmer ingredient such as cream cheese, give it a head start in the mixer to bring it to a consistency similar to the butter.

Dusting Your instinct is right: This is just fancy baker speak for "sprinkling" (salt or sugar, or spices as it applies in this book). Be generous when you do it, unless otherwise noted. Most cookies expand as they bake, so you need a heavy hand to ensure the flavor reaches right to the edge.

Freezing This can be done to most cookie doughs without damage to the finished product. Either portion the cookies in advance and then freeze them on baking sheets, or freeze the entire ball of dough wrapped twice in plastic wrap and then in aluminum foil.

TIP: Let them sit out for a just a few minutes before placing in the oven when ready to bake.

Greasing Smearing a baking sheet, pan, or piece of parchment with butter to prevent sticking. Greasing may also encourage spreading, so be sure to leave ample room between cookies.

Lining Do yourself—and your cookies—a favor! Layer the cookie sheet with a piece of parchment paper to prevent the treats from sticking to the pan and make cleanup a breeze. If you're baking ton of cookies, you should be able to reuse the parchment paper (as long as it's not too butter-doused). Just wait a few minutes to ensure it's not retaining heat from the last batch, and use the opposite side the second time around.

Measuring It's important to note that all recipes in this book were made using the spoon-to-cup method of measuring. Use a spoon to transfer the ingredients into the measuring cup (rather than using the cup as a scoop on its own), then level it off with a straight edge, such as the back of a knife. Following this technique will produce the best results.

Melting Chocolate This might sound like a simple matter of heating, but there is a fascinating science to it. When chocolate melts, the cocoa-butter crystals start to break down and disappear. To keep its stability in the cookie so it holds shape without melting at the touch, looks glossy when dry, and "snaps" when you bite into it, it needs to be brought back to temper, a stage where the crystals have reformed. The easiest method: Drop a few chunks of already tempered chocolate of the same kind (the packaged stuff that is still glossy and unblemished) into the melted batch and stir until incorporated. The stable crystals in the chocolate chunks will slowly spread throughout the bowl, making the rest of the chocolate ready to use.

TIP: Practice your form once or twice before committing to the cookie sheet.

Piping Squeezing dough, icing, or another component through a piping bag to form a decorative pattern. It's best done with a pastry bag and proper pastry tip, but can sometimes be cheated by snipping off the corner of a plastic baggie.

- To fill a piping bag, cup the area just above the tip in one hand and fold the top half of the bag around your wrist. Use the other hand to fill the bag no more than one-third to one-half of the way with a spatula or spoon, then twist the bag closed and squeeze out the excess air until the batter comes out cleanly.
-

Rolling Smoothing a dough into an even, thin sheet with a rolling pin and, when noted, a smattering of flour. Channel the Ice Capades when working on a dough. It should have just enough flour beneath it so that it gliiiiiiides along the countertop or surface between rolls, gracefully and without sticking. To ensure that's the case, show off its moves—spin it, shift it, and rotate it on the surface after each rolling session.

Scooping Keeping cookies relatively uniform in size will ensure an evenly baked batch. For help getting it right, portion them out with a tool such as a measuring spoon, an ice cream scooper, or a cookie scoop. Take a big dip into the dough, then level off the spoon using the side of the bowl or the straight edge of a butter knife.

Sifting Passing powdery ingredients through a sieve or other perforated tool (I use a fine-mesh colander) rids them of lumps and clumps and aerates them. The result is a lighter cookie and greater ease incorporating the dry ingredients into the wet.

Stirring Do it with a flexible spatula or wooden spoon. Mm-hmm, muscle up.

Testing To test the doneness of brownies, blondies and even some extra-thick cookies, poke the end of a toothpick into the center, and pull out. If there's any gooey batter left on the toothpick, keep baking! Stop when the tester 'pick comes out clean.

TIP: When in doubt, try a taste test.

FUN WITH DECORATING: SHOW OFF YOUR SKILLS WITH THESE COOL TRICKS

Add Texture or Pattern

Pressing one of these kitchen tools into the raw cookies adds instant embellishment.

- a 5-hole citrus zester
 - a meat tenderizer
 - a wire rack
 - a whisk tip
 - fork tines
 - a kebab skewer
-

Go nuts with garnishes

Place gorgeous, toasted whole nuts or blanched slivered almonds into the center of cookies just before baking. Brush the area with a little egg white to help them stick. Sprinkles, sanding sugars, nonpareils, and candies are fun, too.

Stick on some stencils

Use an everyday object like a bottle cap as a reverse stencil. Place it in the center of the cookie and sift powdered sugar around the edges.

Pipe a pretty design

Fit a pastry bag with a star tip and fill it with store-bought frosting. Then use it to pipe a pretty star, or a few, onto the top of the cookie.

Doodle

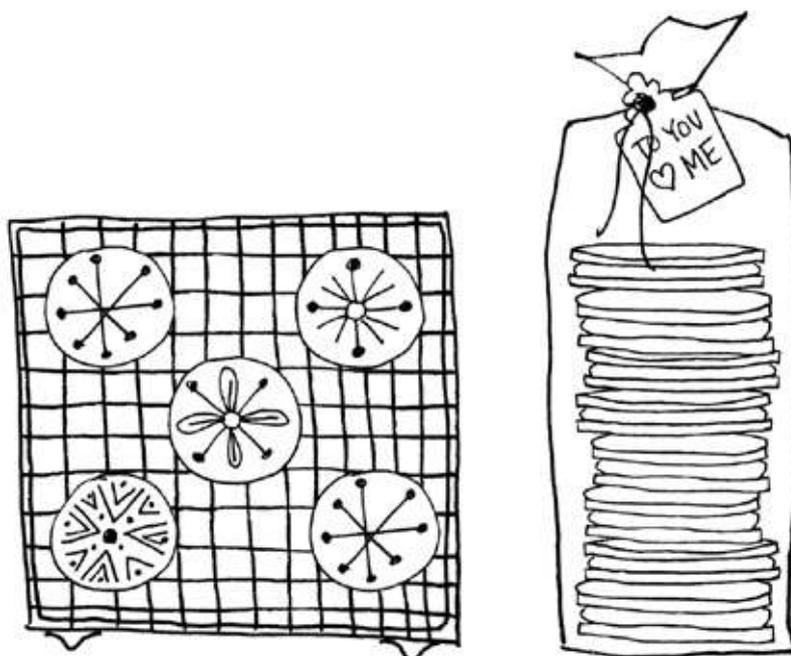
Set cooled cookies on parchment paper or a wire rack with parchment underneath. Dunk a spoon into melted chocolate or a fresh glaze (see [simple glaze](#), and [lemony glaze](#)), then tip the spoon downward to let some drizzle off. Working with what's left, move the spoon back and forth over the cookies to drizzle manicured stripes or wild designs.

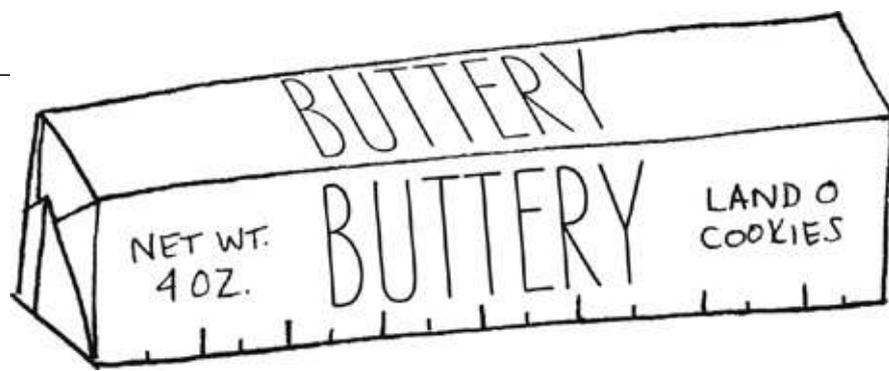
Stick 'em up

Place softer cookies on lollipop or ice-pop sticks to serve to guests in a new way. Or skewer balled cookies on wooden bamboo sticks to make kebab-style cocktail snacks.

Make your mark

Use a rubber stamp to punch words, pictures, or designs into rolled cookies before baking.





ANIMAL COOKIES



BLONDIES



SHORTBREAD



CORNMEAL COOKIES



SABLES



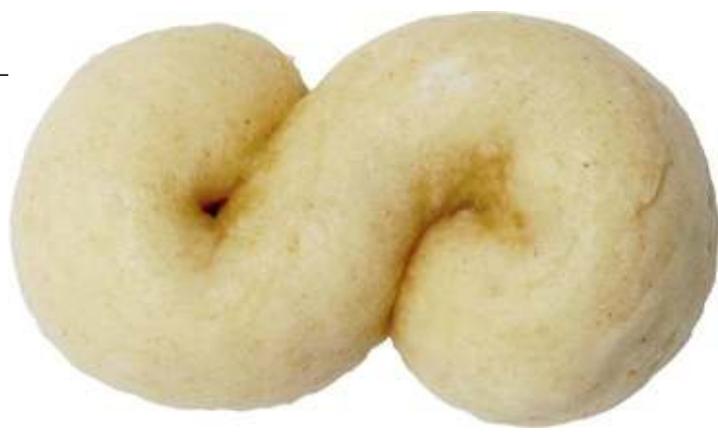
EVERYTHING-BUT-THE-KITCHEN-SINK COOKIES



FROSTED MAPLE PECAN COOKIES



ITALIAN BISCUITS



OLD-FASHIONED SUGAR COOKIES



BUTTER BALLS



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